

SUSTAINABLE U.S. SEAFOOD: A JOURNEY FROM SEA TO MARKET

Go on a journey with NOAA Fisheries Service in this five-part series to learn about the complex process and the people involved in getting safe and sustainable seafood to your dinner plate.

FISHERY SCIENTIST

Steve is a research fisheries biologist at the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) in Seattle, WA. The main focus of Steve's work is the assessment of the health of walleye pollock populations in Alaska. Besides stock assessment, Steve has helped develop programs in which scientists and fishermen work cooperatively to collect data on fishery resources.

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
Sustainability to me means being a good steward to the environment to ensure that seafood will be available to future generations. Sustainable seafood relies on the application of good science to the management of the resource and is dependent on the cooperation of all people involved in the resource: fishermen, scientists, managers and seafood consumers.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
As you learned in Part 2, stock assessments are the documents used by managers to make science-based management decisions. I am also a member of a team of scientists who are working towards ensuring that ecosystem issues are taken into account when managing fisheries in the Aleutian Islands.

Why is your role so important?
Sustainable fisheries cannot happen without good scientific information and that is what my role provides. Through my stock assessments, my research and participation on the Aleutian Island ecosystem team, I ensure that good science is informing management decisions.



Steve Barbeaux, Stock Assessment Scientist, NOAA Fisheries Service

FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGER

Frank has worked for NOAA Fisheries Service since 1998 where he currently is the Assistant Regional Administrator for sustainable fisheries division in the Northwest region. He also represents NOAA Fisheries Service on the Pacific Fisheries Management Council.



Frank Lockhart , Assistant Regional Administrator NOAA Fisheries Service.

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
One of my core responsibilities is to ensure that the American public will have access to a continuing supply of healthy seafood for the foreseeable future. To achieve this, I and other fishery managers have to make sure both the biological resources in the ocean and the fishing communities along the coast that harvest and process these resources remain healthy. Ultimately, sustainable seafood means “sustainable ecosystems.” Both the fish and the fishing communities need to be there so that we can all enjoy the benefits of a healthy seafood supply.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
My work on the Council is to look at the latest science and numbers of fish to make sure that we are not harvesting too much or too little from the groundfish fishery in federal waters from Canada to Mexico. The groundfish fishery is a very diverse fishery, which includes dozens of different fish species that mostly live near the ocean bottom.

Why is your role so important?
Harvest limits change every year. It's important that everyone understands the best information about the conditions of the fish and their habitat in order to set the appropriate harvest limits. My job is to make sure that we set the rules according to how well the fish are doing, so that we can let the fishery rebuild if needed.

FISHERMAN

Corey's been a salmon fisherman for the last 23 years. “It’s my life, it’s my job. I enjoy catching fish and it’s a way of catching the best source of protein on the planet.”

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
I ensure the quality of the fish I catch over the quantity of fish I could catch because these fish need to be around for generations. I take care of these fish like I am going to eat them myself. The fish I catch come on my boat one at a time and are taken care of from the minute they hit the deck. They're cleaned and iced and they will be in somebody's restaurant or on somebody's plate within three days. In fact, my fish are fit for the President of the United States. They have been served at a White House State Dinner.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
I am a hook-and-line troll fisherman because it is a very ecologically sound way to catch fish. I troll single barbless hooks through the water and land only the fish that are legal to catch. Those that are not legal to catch, I gently release off of the barbless hook and they swim away. There is not substantial bycatch. I am not decimating the resource.

Why is your role so important?
It's a great feeling to know that people are eating good, high quality, well-cared-for fish. It makes me feel really good about what I'm doing—that's why I do it. I am catching one of the highest quality proteins on the planet and it is a very good food source. Ocean troll-caught king salmon are absolutely top of the line.



Corey Feldner, Commercial Salmon Fisherman from Newport, OR. Fishing Method: Hook and line troll

FISHERY OBSERVER

It all started when Samantha saw a poster recruiting observers outside of a biology classroom while obtaining a degree in biology at the University of Southern Alabama. Four years later, she still loves going out to sea and has been on more than 20 vessels in Alaska.



Samantha Stow, Fishery Observer, NOAA

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
Sustainable seafood means seafood that can be harvested with as little destruction to the ecosystem as possible. This preserves jobs and food sources for years to come.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
As an observer, I work directly with fishermen and see how the catch limits affect their lives. It is the goal of observers to aid in science based management decisions and to assist in in-season management of a fishery. While at sea, I observe how the fish are caught and I collect data that are used to statistically analyze the fishery's catch. Without these data, the managers of the fishery would not know how many fish were caught.

Why is your role so important?
Knowing how a fishery works, how many fish are caught and having a mechanism to get this information to NOAA for managing the fishery cannot be done without observers. We also collect specimens and extra data for research projects. I have brought back things like birds, fish stomachs, fish ovaries and fish otoliths which all help scientists indicate the health of a fishery.

SEAFOOD INSPECTOR

Milton has been a Consumer Safety Officer with NOAA for over 20 years. To pay for college Milton worked in salmon canneries across Alaska as a quality control inspector for the fishing industry. After college he thought he was going to work for the FDA, but then learned about the seafood inspection program at NOAA and applied.

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
Sustainable seafood means that it is managed properly so the resource is available at the present and for generations to come.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
My role is to diligently monitor what is being offered for inspection. That means making sure that the seafood we inspected and certified is wholesome, properly labeled and handled to maximize marketability. That means being aware of species substitution, and exploited and illegally harvested species.

Why is your role so important?
I provide consistent inspection services and make sure that only safe, wholesome product with economic integrity reaches the market. This is accomplished by inspecting the product or by auditing the process. For instance, as a sensory panelist, I contributed to the recovery of Gulf of Mexico fisheries from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill disaster of 2010.



Milton Chiu, Consumer Safety Officer, NOAA Seafood Inspection Program

CHEF

Christine founded Flying Fish in Seattle 16 years ago and has been placing quality, sustainable seafood on your plate ever since. “I don’t know that I could mark the moment when I decided to become a chef. Somehow I fell into a passion for this business.”

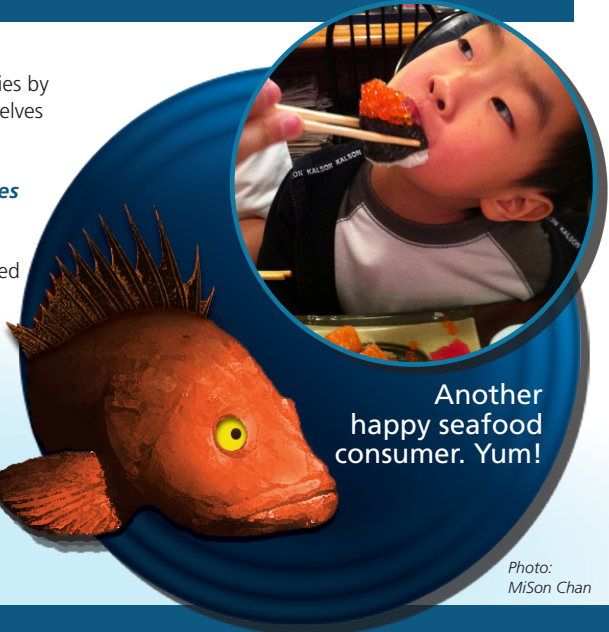


Christine Keff, Owner and Chef, Flying Fish in Seattle, WA.

What does the term “sustainable seafood” mean to you?
To me, sustainable seafood means that we are protecting our nation's fisheries by harvesting fish at a sound level, meaning the populations can replace themselves and will be here for future generations.

What role do you play in the sustainable management of U.S. fisheries and how do you contribute to this process?
I play a very important role because I insist on serving sustainable seafood. I help to educate my customers about the importance of sustainably managed fisheries, whether it is North Pacific swordfish or Pacific bigeye tuna. I hope to change the thought processes and buying patterns of the consumers who enter my doors and I think I've made a real difference in doing so.

Why is your role so important?
I view myself as a conduit between fisheries scientists and the public. People don't understand all of the technical details that go into managing our fisheries in a sustainable manner. My goal is to make this information more easily understandable to my customers and to educate them about making smart choices that help sustain our marine resources.



Another happy seafood consumer. Yum!

Photo: MiSon Chan